



## **U.S. CHEMICAL SAFETY BOARD NEWS RELEASE**

### **Board Commends the Kentucky Office of Housing, Buildings, and Construction, Says New Combustible Dust Inspection Program “Exceeds Recommended Action” from Investigation of Fatal 2003 Explosion**

Washington, DC, August 16, 2006 - The U.S. Chemical Safety Board (CSB) today formally commended the Kentucky Office of Housing, Buildings, and Construction (HBC), for exceeding the recommended action from the Board’s investigation of the fatal 2003 dust explosion at CTA Acoustics in Corbin, Kentucky.

During the investigation, the CSB found that the Kentucky State Fire Marshal’s office, which is part of HBC, did not regularly inspect industrial facilities for fire safety and had not inspected the CTA facility since it was constructed in 1972. On February 15, 2005, the Board voted at a public meeting in London, Kentucky, to recommend that HBC “identify sites that handle combustible dusts when facilities apply for new or modified construction permits, and use this information to help prioritize establishments that will be inspected by the fire marshal.”

The HBC fulfilled the recommendation by modifying its building code review process to identify all new or modified facilities that can generate large quantities of combustible dust and adding those facilities to the state fire marshal’s annual inspection list. The HBC also went above and beyond the CSB safety recommendation by: (1) generating a list of existing facilities at risk for combustible dust explosions; (2) successfully seeking additional funding from the legislature to hire more inspectors; (3) prioritizing its 2006 inspection schedule to concentrate on facilities with combustible dust hazards; and (4) actively working with inspected facilities to generate cleaning plans. On the basis of these additional actions, which will help to reduce future dust explosion risks, the Board voted to designate the recommendation as “Closed – exceeds recommended action.”

The explosion on February 20, 2003, at CTA Acoustics killed seven workers, injured 37 others, and essentially destroyed the facility which produced automotive insulation. The Board’s investigation found that the facility lacked effective firewalls and blast-resistant construction designs and had extensive accumulations of combustible phenolic resin powder, which fueled the explosion. The incident was one of three fatal combustible dust explosions that occurred in 2003 and were investigated by the CSB. Subsequent to those explosions, the Board began a national study of combustible dust hazards, which has so far identified 281 industrial dust explosions in the U.S over a 25-year period; those incidents resulted in 119 deaths and 718 injuries.

CSB Chairman Carolyn Merritt said, “The Kentucky state government has demonstrated a strong commitment to making industrial facilities in the state safer from deadly dust explosions. The new program is helping to identify workplaces at risk and promote

(more)

changes. The Kentucky program is a model for other states to study and follow. Kentucky's action will help prevent future tragedies like the one that claimed seven workers' lives in 2003."

The Board votes to assign a status to each of its safety recommendations based on a staff analysis of documents and other information provided by recipients. The Board may designate a recipient's actions as "acceptable" or "unacceptable" based on whether the actions meet the intention of the Board's safety recommendation. The "exceeds recommended action" designation has been used only six times among the 178 formal safety recommendations that the Board has closed since 1998.

The CSB is an independent federal agency charged with investigating industrial chemical accidents. The agency's board members are appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate. CSB investigations consider all aspects of chemical accidents, including physical causes such as equipment failure as well as inadequacies in safety management systems, regulations, and industry standards.

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